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Growing Alaska Through Responsible Resource Development

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## RDC: Further ANWR lock up ignores law of the land

January 27, 2015 ANCHORAGE: The Resource Development Council (RDC) admonishes the Obama Administration's latest efforts to lock up additional land in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR.)

"This attempt at further Wilderness designations completely ignores the federal law and land compromise made in the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) in 1980," stated Rick Rogers, Executive Director of RDC. "Regardless of one's opinion on drilling in the Arctic, this is an attack on our sovereignty as a state and our ability to manage our own lands."

The state of Alaska has a total of 58 million acres of land designated as federal Wilderness, which is over half of the nation's federally designated lands. If combined into one block, the federal Wilderness in Alaska would be the 11<sup>th</sup> largest state.

One of the most important parts of ANILCA are Section 101 (d) – the purposes section – and Section 1326 – commonly referred to as the "No More" clause. In Section 101, Congress said that ANILCA represents a proper balance between conservation and development and **no more** land would be withdrawn for conservation purposes by the federal government. Additionally, the land compromise *doubled* the size of the refuge to 19 million acres, but singled out and put aside 1.5 million acres of the coastal plain for its rich oil and gas potential. Eight million acres of ANWR were designated Wilderness. In closing off future development forever, the latest action amounts to a broken promise and flies in the face of the administration's recent pledge to consult and involve Alaska directly on Arctic policies, especially those impacting our economic future and livelihoods of all Alaskans.

Ironically, Congress did not authorize Statehood until it was convinced Alaska could support itself, as opposed to becoming a ward of the federal government. It was only after the discovery of oil in Alaska and the likelihood of large discoveries across the North Slope that Congress voted for statehood. A Wilderness designation over the coastal plain would deny Alaska the economic benefits that would come from the responsible oil and gas development of America's greatest onshore, conventional oil prospect, severely compromising our future economy.

Over the 45 years oil and gas development has occurred on the North Slope, Alaskans have proven that such activity – even in sensitive areas – can coexist with wildlife. Caribou populations have climbed from 3,000 animals in 1970 to over 60,000 today in and around producing fields. With advances in technology, future development in ANWR would impact less than one percent of the refuge. From an economic and environmental standpoint, this decision was purely political, unnecessary, unfair to Alaska, and just plain wrong.